

Last week the House of Representatives passed the Fiscal Year 2006 House Republican budget, which contains harmful cuts to federal investments in Maryland that the state would be forced to absorb.

Regrettably, this budget makes even deeper cuts to the federal budget than that of the President, slashing funding for Medicaid; cutting funds for local law enforcement, community development and housing; eliminating important education programs; increasing fees for veterans' health care; and reducing environmental protections to pay for trillions in tax cuts that disproportionately benefit the wealthiest Americans which will burden future generations – without requiring that these tax cuts be paid for so they don't contribute to the ballooning deficit.

Additionally, the budget omits the cost of fixing the Alternative Minimum Tax, the costs for the Iraqi war, and any costs for the President's Social Security privatization plan – which would add \$5 trillion to the deficit over 20 years.

Democrats offered an alternative FY2006 budget, which reflected America's priorities and mainstream values, but it was rejected by the Republican-controlled Congress. The Democratic budget achieves balance within seven years. It has a smaller deficit than the Republican budget every year and accumulates hundreds of billions less debt.

This Republican budget is one big IOU being sent to our children and young people. It represents the wrong choices and wrong priorities for the people of Maryland and I reject the irresponsible and immoral deficits and debt Republicans are racking up to be paid by Maryland's future generations. By purposefully omitting costs and recklessly failing to reach balance, this budget is an immoral tax on our children and grandchildren that threatens the economic strength of our nation.

This budget slashes funding for critical domestic programs that have a record of success and provide vital assistance to our state and local governments so that they can provide essential programs and services to our communities. These cuts will be damaging to Maryland's future, especially when it comes to ensuring that Marylanders have access to affordable health care and that our first responders have the resources and training they need to protect our communities.

The budget places even greater burdens on our children and families. From 2006 to 2010, nearly 1,300 more Maryland children will be prevented from attending a Head Start Program; 4,300 more Maryland children will not receive child care; 7,900 Maryland families will lose Rental Assistance Vouchers; 4,100 Maryland families will lose Low Income Home Energy Assistance. And, this budget proposes to cut \$183 million for education spending by 2010 including \$11.3 million for education for the disadvantaged, \$133 million for special education programs and \$56.3 million for School Improvement programs.

The budget eliminates many current development programs – including the popular Community Development Block Grant – and consolidates them into one new grant. But that new grant has about one-third less funding than those programs currently receive, thus cutting the assistance available to benefit distressed communities by at least \$1.5 billion. In Fiscal Year 2004, Community Development Block Grants (CDBG) brought in more than \$66 million in our state.

Furthermore, Maryland is set to lose \$413.5 million in revenues due to the proposed tax cuts over the next five years. One component of the tax changes, the reduction in capital gains and dividend tax rates – a change that would primarily benefit those making more than \$200,000 a year – would be nearly twice the size of the \$208.6 million our state is set to lose in Medicaid funding over five years under the Republican budget proposal.

Democrats are absolutely committed to real action on reining in the record deficits and exploding debt that President Bush and Republicans have created. I supported the Democratic budget which is fiscally responsible and achieves balance within seven years, while protecting services that people in Maryland depend upon, like education, veterans' health care, environmental protections and community development. I will continue to fight to get our fiscal house in order and support the values and priorities of the people of Maryland.